

CLAIMS

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1. ~~A latching apparatus comprising:~~
- 5           a post member defining,  
          an elongated axis,  
          an elongated, laterally extending latching  
          surface defined at an outer radius from  
          said axis, and  
10           an elongated, laterally extending  
          releasing surface defined at an inner  
          radius from said axis, wherein said  
          outer radius is greater than said inner  
          radius;
- 15           a latching assembly defining a passage for  
          receiving said post member and including a  
          grip means extending at least partially into  
          said passage for,  
20                effecting a grip between said post member  
                  and said latching assembly when said  
                  grip means engages said latching  
                  surface, and  
          releasing said grip between said post  
          member and said latching assembly when  
          said grip means engages said releasing  
25           surface; and  
          a moving means for,  
              moving said latching surface into  
              engagement with said grip means,  
              whereby said grip is effected between  
30           said post member and said latching  
              assembly, and  
              moving said releasing surface into  
              engagement with said grip means,  
              whereby said grip is released between  
35           said post member and said latching

assembly.

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- ~~2. Apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said releasing surface defines a smooth surface.~~
3. Apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said latching surface defines a notched surface.
4. Apparatus of Claim 3, wherein said notched surface includes, at least, a plurality of teeth.
5. Apparatus of Claim 1,  
wherein said grip means includes, at least, a ball, and  
wherein said latching means further comprises,  
an inner shell defining said passage and further defining a radial opening in said inner shell, wherein said ball is located in and radially movable within said radial opening,  
an outer shell positioned outside said inner shell, wherein said inner shell is axially slidable in a first direction and a second direction with respect to said outer shell, said outer shell including, at least, a tapered portion defining a tapered inner surface adjacent to said ball, and  
a biasing means for biasing said inner shell axially in said first direction such that said ball is biased into engagement with said tapered inner surface, whereby said ball is biasly urged radially inwardly into said passage, wherein said biasing means

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could

accommodates movement of said inner  
shell in said second direction to  
accommodate radial movement of said  
ball out of said passage.

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